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NEWS-LETTER

WOMAN POWER
BY
MARY STOCKS

SUPPLEMENT

SCIENCE AND THE FREE SOCIETY
BY
A. D. RITCHIE

WHEN THE MCNAIR COMMITTEE on the Recruitment and Training of Teachers took stock in 1942 of the problem it was called upon to solve, it was confronted by some discouraging statistics. The imaginative and expansive Education Bill which was, at that time, on its way through the intricacies of the legislative machine, satisfied the ambitions and kindled the hopes of educationists of all parties. The school-leaving age was to be higher, classes they hoped would be smaller, grammar school education up to university age was to be freely provided for all who could profit by it. Continued part-time education was to be compulsory; adult education was to be everywhere available. The question before the committee was: how to produce a corresponding enlargement in the supply of adequately qualified teachers.

Before the war the training colleges and universities were capable of supplying something round about 7,000 new teachers annually to make good the annual wastage from a teaching body some 215,000 strong, the majority of whom were women. It was clear, however, that the new educational set-up, when fully operative, was going to demand an increase of not less than 70,000 in the teaching body—probably more—and that thereafter an annual intake of some

15,000 would be necessary to keep the educational pot on the boil. Where was this measurable accession of strength to be obtained?

Hitherto the recruitment had been from grant-aided and independent schools of the grammar school type. But how far was this source of supply likely to prove adequate in face of the larger demands of the post-war scheme which was regarded by all political parties as comprising the reasonable requirements of a civilized egalitarian community? Its obvious *in*adequacy was painfully demonstrated by reference to the precise magnitude of the group from which the teachers were drawn. There were roughly 21,000 children of 17 (the earliest age at which a teacher can begin to train) in the secondary schools. But was it likely that the expanded needs of the profession could be met from an age-group which was " also the major source of supply of other professions and occupations such as medicine, law, engineering, architecture, the Church, the civil service, and many other types of work which require a preliminary education of the kind which is offered by secondary schools "? The McNair Committee thought not. We will therefore leave them, for the moment, with the problem of finding a bridge to the teaching profession from the demobilized services and from the more spacious recruiting ground of the modern and technical schools, and with the ultimate hope that when a larger proportion of the adolescent community is properly educated there will be a larger source of supply from which to draw those who are to do the educating.

COMPETITION FOR SKILLED WOMAN-POWER

But the post-war education service is not alone in making new demands for qualified practitioners, especially for women. The new National Health Service casts its shadowy requirements before. These include more doctors, more nurses, more midwives, more physiotherapists, more ward orderlies. But as things are at the moment we are faced not with a prospective but with an existing shortage of

woman power in all the health services, inadequate as these services are to-day. The nursing service, for instance, is inadequately staffed just because it is inadequately staffed. Because student nurses are used to meet urgent staff deficiencies their training requirements are in many cases subordinated to staffing needs. The resulting disgruntlement helps to produce a heavy wastage among trainees. Because hospitals and maternity units are understaffed trained nurses are over-driven and their skilled labour is misdirected to routine tasks. The job becomes progressively less attractive to those who are potentially interested in the care and treatment of the sick—as indeed for the keen teacher does the job of handling a class so large that teaching skill and individual interest in the children goes for naught.

Meanwhile the demand for more and more trained women goes on swelling, and with it the pressure on this meagre secondary school age-group which, other things being equal, the low birth-rate of the inter-war years will render increasingly meagre. We are, in fact, becoming increasingly social-service conscious.[1] All hospitals should have almoners. All housing authorities should have Octavia Hill trained housing managers. All public authorities responsible for the care of children deprived of home background should have an adequate service of trained women child welfare officers to select and visit boarding arrangements and where necessary administer institutions. All police courts should have trained probationers and psychiatric workers.[2] All schools should have care committees and the care committees should be cherished by trained care organizers. All education authorities should have Juvenile Employment Officers. All new estates should have community centres which in their turn should have wardens, and clubs staffed by trained youth leaders. All industries should have welfare departments run by trained welfare

[1] See the Report to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust, by Eileen L. Younghusband on The Employment and Training of Social Workers, January, 1946.

[2] See the Joint Report by the British Medical Association and the Magistrates' Association on the problem of the unstable adolescent girl, June, 1947.

officers and personnel managers. Even the Church, though it still recognizes in women some indefinable spiritual sex-incapacity, should expand its army of church workers, club workers, moral welfare workers. It is actively engaged in promoting their recruitment and training. And behind this expanding guardianship of the sick, bewildered, insecure, uneducated or delinquent public, stretch the correspondingly expanding bureaucracies of national and local government with their need for administrators and executants capable of jumping at least from school certificate and preferably from university graduate standard, into the responsibilities which twentieth-century conceptions of "the good life" impose upon the servants of the State.

SOURCES OF SUPPLY

If anything is clear it is that we are not going to solve a woman-power demand of this magnitude without tapping larger sources than the grammar school higher age-group of to-day. Nevertheless, even without going further we could doubtless do a little better with the resources at our disposal by shedding the last vestige of our prejudice against the work of married women and making more ingenious arrangements than we have hitherto thought convenient, for the economical employment of part-time. At present nothing is done to keep intact any skill which a woman may have acquired before marriage.

The McNair Report was determined on that course, in spite of the time-table difficulties which plague head-mistresses. So, as readers of the daily press have lately been made aware, is the hospital service—the snag in this case being that payment for part-time nursing compares unfavourably with that for part-time charring. But successful experiments in hospital shift-work with a consequent lightening of the burden of long hours have been made at Gloucester, and Gloucester's example is being followed elsewhere.

But all this is a mitigation rather than a solution of the demand for educated and trained woman-power. A much

larger solution must depend on the educators themselves. If we can really produce a system of secondary and continued education which will free us from dependence upon our present meagre and diminishing age group of 17–18 year-old female grammar school leavers, we can expand our source of supply and bring it into some relation with the needs of the education, health and other social services. If all girls with an inborn capacity for absorbing professional training were able to receive it, and if those who fail to display such capacity until they have missed the 'bus to a grammar school education were enabled to retrieve the situation by the bridge of continued part-time education, it could be done.

And then what? The professional recruits are drawn from somewhere. They are in fact drawn from that large pool of woman-power which provides for the needs of industry, entertainment, domestic service, shop assistance, typing—all of which services are themselves crying aloud for woman-power. Domestic service cries the loudest, and the more we expand our social and industrial welfare services the louder it will cry: ward-maids and more ward-maids, canteen workers and more canteen workers, home helps, nursery nurses, cooks, cleaners. But the textile industries are crying very loudly too, and typists are known to be in short supply.

THE UNDER-STAFFING OF HOMES

Meanwhile, there is one other occupation which demands with growing insistence a share at the feast: one which cross-cuts the professional and the industrial, the modern school-leavers and the grammar school-leavers, not to mention the university graduates and the trained professionals. Husbands cry aloud for the services of their wives, children for those of their mothers. Home-making is throughout the country grossly understaffed, and there can be little doubt that when the present housing shortage has been circumvented, if it ever is, the understaffing will become more apparent. In many cases, because of it, homes are not being

made—with disastrous consequences to the happiness and morals of humanity and to the immediate well-being of the younger generation. And yet the only way which occurs to our administrators for meeting the understaffing of industry is by accentuating the understaffing of home-making and causing an increased pressure of demand on the staffing of day nurseries. Can we really redress the situation by a further exodus of women from the home? Or rather, granting that we can—and after all to a large extent we did during the later war years—is it the best or the only solution?

It is certainly part of the solution. How large a part only experience will show. There is a lot of time wasted in homes by childless women and by mothers, still able-bodied, whose children no longer need supervision; and such wasted time leads more often to boredom and restlessness than to the enjoyment and communicable serenity of those who really know how to "stand and stare". It would be interesting, though doubtless impertinent in a free country, to make a sample analysis of the milling crowds of women who surge daily like a great human tide into the London shopping centres of Oxford Street or High Street, Kensington. The apparent aimlessness of their perambulations, the slowness of their mass movement past windows and counters suggest the existence of untapped sources of woman-power. Or is it that very many home-making women have lost or failed to acquire the capacity to manage their own time?

But that is a small matter. As a long range policy designed not to avert a military or economic catastrophe but to provide a pattern of social life for a civilized community, the general widespread withdrawal of women from the business of home-making is no real solution for a woman-power shortage. It is one which is as disastrous, and disastrous on a larger scale, as our older attempts, enforced by rule or precept, to keep them at home, when taste or aptitude impels them to seek specialized work outside. In addition, it is somewhat illogical. With one hand the State indicates, through its social services and education in domesticity and mothercraft, that home-making is a skilled and nationally

important occupation. With the other hand it beckons and coaxes women away from home life with assurances that it is not a whole-time job.

There is another contributory solution, though by what means it is attainable only a strong and ruthless Minister of Labour could determine. There are numerous jobs in industry to-day, especially in the engineering industry, which are performed by semi-skilled and unskilled women because they are relatively cheap. There are, the nature of our unemployment figures seem to suggest, quite a considerable number of men capable of doing such jobs but unwilling to do them for a woman's wage. The narrowing of the gap between men's and women's wages might, of course, in some spheres exclude women from jobs, which they do less well than men, but which they can nevertheless do tolerably well. But where we are faced not with a problem of unemployment among women, but rather with a problem of woman-power shortage in jobs for which women *qua* women are wanted, what have we to fear from the replacement of unskilled women by elderly men? Such a policy would, of course, require a more flexible or a more logically planned wage structure than we enjoy in industry to-day. But if it were made effective we should be spared the uneconomic spectacle of an able-bodied young woman engaged upon a job while an elderly man stands idle—merely because she is relatively cheap.

PLANNED PRIORITIES OR CHOSEN PRIORITIES?

There remains, of course, the larger solution: the solution upon which we instinctively turn our backs because with the war fresh in mind and totalitarianism in the background it suggests the subordination of the individual to the State: the solution of planned priorities. Some indication was given recently of the volume of woman-power absorbed by the football pools, which might otherwise be available for the textile industry. Given an inflationary situation, the pockets of the public, or at any rate a considerable section of it, are bulging with purchasing power

which cannot in an age of rationing and absolute shortages be fully expended on the basic material satisfactions of life. Innumerable mothers and fathers of families spend on entertainment, money which they would prefer to spend on adequate housing accommodation and domestic help or, in many cases, on having more children under conditions which make family life a joy instead of a struggle. Certainly the "free consumer choice", which some of us regard as an element of inalienable civil liberty, is drawing large masses of woman-power into occupations which, if not deleterious, are at any rate less vital to the happiness and well-being of mankind than the social services and the basic industries.

This being so, it is unlikely that the direction of woman-power can be greatly affected merely by securing an improvement of salaries for what would be generally regarded as the priority jobs. The beauty-parlour and the turf commission agency will continue to bid successfully for secretarial assistance against the local education office or the hospital. And upon the obvious alternative, compulsory direction of labour, we have, it seems, turned our backs.

We are, therefore, cast back upon the good sense and public spirit of the people and upon an ultimate readjustment of values. It seldom occurs to a young woman at the outset of her career to question the social utility of her job. The alternatives are, in fact, seldom presented to her in these terms. Salary is a consideration—but one which operates with decreasing force as the range of things which money will buy diminishes. Location, hours of work, opportunities for promotion all play their part. In selecting a sphere in industry the social importance of what she makes is a minor consideration. Indeed it is seldom a consideration at all. The shop assistant who sells powder-compacts in Piccadilly is as honourably and doubtless more entertainingly employed than the shop assistant who sells cabbages in Kilburn.

It has long been realized that in a community whose purchasing power is unequally distributed Adam Smith's

"invisible hand" of market price, directing our capital and labour power hither and thither in response to the varying intensities of consumer demand, produced some awkward social anomalies. But if the inequalities of purchasing power produced anomalies they also produced incentives. So with a fairly generous measure of redistribution through the social services to mitigate the social effects of the inequalities, and a sufficient margin of productive power to make the expenditure of resources on insignificant ends not too painfully wasteful, the situation was tolerable. Our moral energies were not continually on the stretch to determine whether what was remunerative was right. But to-day, we are less tolerant of the inequalities—we have in fact gone far towards their elimination. And, with straitened resources we are less tolerant of the wastage. So if we are to avoid a curtailment of our civil liberties it seems that we must widen the area of our moral responsibilities.

That being so, what can we say to the young woman who recently advertised herself in *The Times* as " Educated girl, 21, tall, smart appearance, seeks *occupation*: interested fashion, artistic arrangement of flowers and vases; domesticated; preferably London ".

Unfortunately we cannot say anything, for her identity is decently veiled in the anonymity of " Box L. 604 ".

Mary Stocks

EDITORIAL NOTE

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SCIENCE AND THE FREE SOCIETY

BY A. D. RITCHIE

As Mr. Murry has argued (in the Supplement to No. 284, 30th April, 1947) the unfettered pursuit of truth is possible only within the free society, but the freedom of that society implies the recognition of moral principle. Consequently those who advocate moral relativism and deny any kind of principle or standard are destroying the very possibility of the free enquiry they profess to value. The argument applies within the field of scientific enquiry, taken in the narrowest and most technical sense, as well as elsewhere. This point is well brought out in Professor Polanyi's Riddell Memorial Lectures, *Science, Faith and Society*. They should go far to dispel the confusion that has prevailed about the relation of the scientific investigator to society, a confusion first caused by the exaggerations of extreme individualism and then made worse confounded by the exaggerations of extreme collectivism. The following remarks are based on Professor Polanyi's treatment.

SCIENTIFIC SOCIAL GROUPS

In the heyday of *laissez-faire* doctrine in the nineteenth century the man of science was seen as an individual of no political and small social importance who pleased himself by gratifying a private (and rather vulgar) curiosity about the natural world, but who might equally have been a *dilettante* of more refined taste and collected Roman coins or bred spaniels. That view was not totally erroneous; and a hundred years ago was still a rather harmless error. Certainly the line separating the *dilettante* and the genuine student was not easy to draw. In exaggerating the private character of scientific pursuits the view ignored a striking feature in the history of science from the earliest times, the development of schools and societies of collaborators. We find them at the very beginning in ancient Greece; the

school of Miletus, the Pythagoreans, the various medical schools, the Academy, the Lyceum and the great school of Alexandria. They had some social and even political importance, influencing and influenced by their environment. With the Renaissance came the various academies and societies of Western Europe, of which the Royal Society of London is now the oldest and most famous. In spite of all obvious differences universities should be included too, and also the colleges of physicians and surgeons (showing the influence of the mediaeval guild system on the intellectual world). These bodies are all " societies " in the special sense, that they are organizations of collaborators deliberately created for a specific purpose. To that extent they are " artificial ". They are " natural ", however, in another sense, in that it is " natural " for those interested in the same things to discuss them together and to arrange to do so in a systematic way. They are also " communities " to some extent, in the special sense that the members are living a common life in fellowship. (This is far less true now than previously when these bodies were smaller and the members really knew each other personally.) They are also free associations. Nobody is a member unless he wants to be. On the other hand they impose certain standards of conduct on members and those who violate the standards have to leave. They are equalitarian to the extent that the only inequality recognized is one of performance ; apart from that of teacher and pupil, which is temporary and for a special purpose.

THE RELATION OF SCIENTIFIC GROUPS TO THE COMMUNITY

Thus practically all scientific men belong to scientific social groups consisting of their scientific peers, but these groups exist only within a larger community if for no other reason than that scientific investigation can hardly be economically self-supporting. The scientific community must, therefore, depend on the goodwill, or, at least, the toleration of the rest of the community. Several writers,

inspired by Marxist theory, have maintained that the scientific investigator is a public servant whose work is to be valued solely for what it contributes to public welfare, and public welfare is then interpreted in a purely economic sense. This account involves denying the validity of the old distinction between pure science and applied science of technology. Admittedly the technologist is a public servant in the same sense as any producer is, for he is making or handling things that may be either useful or harmful. The farmer is a public servant in that he is producing things that others will consume. It is not solely his own private concern whether he grows wheat for food or poppies for opium. In the same way the agricultural technologist is a public servant who can show the farmer how to grow two ears of wheat where he grew one before or else how to grow two poppy heads where he grew one before. Over technology we need not quarrel with Marxist theory ; but when it goes on to deny the existence of pure science on the grounds that social utility is the sole legitimate aim of action and the sole test of truth, then it becomes absurd.

Without some independent criterion of truth we could not arrive at a valid judgment about which kind of act is socially useful and which is not. Some truths are accepted as true regardless of social utility. Ancient mathematicians discovered that the side of a square is incommensurable with the diagonal, but outside the very restricted society of pure mathematicians nobody has ever noticed any social consequences to follow. Yet all mathematicians accept the discovery as valid, even, I suppose, the mathematicians of the U.S.S.R. Again the discovery of a planet more remote than Neptune has no social consequences outside the society of astronomers, yet it appears to be accepted, perhaps even in the U.S.S.R.

The question of the criteria of truth in science is a complex one and cannot be discussed here (Professor Polanyi deals with it very well) but evidently the criteria work pretty well because there is universal agreement over a wide and

increasing field. There is controversy too, and the subjects of controversy increase rather than diminish in number ; but controversy is, as it were, peripheral and the periphery gets longer because the field of agreement gets larger. One point however I must mention as it concerns the relations between individual and society.

For the individual investigator the final court of appeal is and can only be his own conviction of truth. He must be left free to exercise his own judgment and to follow his own argument wherever it leads. On the other hand his judgment is of value only because it is a trained judgment, because he has been trained as a member of a group in accordance with a tradition. (This is a condemnation of the " dabbler " not of the " amateur ", who may be a very valuable member of the group.) The individual does not create standards for himself; he finds them. He must accept them as his own or else the tradition means nothing to him. Nevertheless the tradition leaves him to make his own choice on any question that is a technical or professional matter. He is not free to choose whether to be honest or dishonest, but he is free to decide whether an alleged matter of fact is genuine or not, or whether a proposed argument is valid or not. If he is convinced that his fellows are in error he says so. If he is convinced that he has found something new he declares it. He does this because and only because he respects the judgments of his fellows as he does his own ; not as infallible but as responsible to each other for maintaining the standards of their tradition. It is for each of the others to decide whether he is right or wrong. In the long run a collective judgment appears and prevails ; sometimes in the very long run only, for the collective judgment of any one generation is not infallible.

It is these relations of mutual respect, this kind of tradition that guides and enlightens without binding, this kind of freedom to speak as one thinks that constitutes a free society. Within the community of scientific investigators the free society has been realized more fully than elsewhere, though only within the limited realm of scientific co-opera-

tion. Outside their chosen subject the men of science are just as stupid and obstinate as anyone else. Within it, matters of controversy may be entirely impersonal and seldom impinge on what are felt to be vital personal interests. This makes things easy ; it avoids certain obstacles.

The positive condition for co-operation, however, is quite different and too often not noticed ; it is the existence of moral standards embodied in a tradition, which if it restricts does so solely in the individual's own interest. A man is free to question any single item of scientific belief, but the scientific tradition as a whole and its standards he accepts without reservation. It is only in one special case that an explicit statement of moral standards has been made, but that is an important one, and it is worth noticing that the statement was made twenty-four centuries ago. The branch of science concerned is medical science and the statement is the Hippocratic oath.

THE THREAT TO THE FREE SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY

At the present time there is a serious threat to the standards and traditions of the scientific community. It comes from the anxiety of governments to promote research into weapons of destruction under a pledge of secrecy. In time of actual war there is reason for requiring secrecy in certain cases. But the maintenance of secrecy as permanent policy is bound to destroy the mutual trust which has hitherto held the scientific community together and may quite easily destroy the scientific community, once and for all. In view of the misinterpretations which Marxists will put on such a statement it is necessary to add that the high priests of state-controlled science are not the bourgeois-capitalists, and that if the state has monopoly of science it necessarily makes it secret, because no government ever divulges anything which might result in disadvantage to itself, except under external compulsion.

The kind of free society which exists within the scientific community may be taken as a pattern of any free society ; but, as I have hinted, the pattern is not so easily applied to

politics because political controversy springs from the clash of rival interests, of claims and counter-claims. Not only do these rouse men's more violent passions but complete and final solutions are not possible. Everybody's claim cannot be satisfied ; somebody must get less. If the solution is a compromise everybody gets less. In economic matters this state of affairs is inevitable. No price is as high as the seller thinks it should be, or as low as the buyer thinks it should be. The compromise price may well give both parties as much as they need, but neither willingly admits that. A free society cannot be based on economic relations because they are competitive. Strict equality might abolish resentment, but is unattainable in a complex economy where some give orders while others obey orders, and are therefore at an economic disadvantage. Capitalism or socialism makes no difference to this fact. If economic affairs were self adjusting as *laissez-faire* theory supposed, politics might be concerned with non-competitive co-operation and a free political society easy to attain, as used to be thought. Or if political action could eliminate competition as socialists used to imagine, then again a free society would be easy to attain. Neither alternative seems possible, and therefore the obstacles are serious.

The Christian Church should have been the leaven that leavened the whole community, but the moulds were there first and worked more powerfully than the yeast, producing the unpleasant mixture we all know. And, to mix the metaphor a bit, the Church has been corrupted by the State far more effectively than the Church has reformed the State.

On the other side, whatever the defects of the Christian Church in its relation to the State, the motive power for reform has come from Christian teaching. This does not mean that only professed Christians arrive at correct moral principles. These moral principles have been enunciated for more than two thousand years by Chinese sages, Indian mystics, Hebrew prophets, Greek philosophers, as well as some others. Those from different countries have spoken entirely independently by the light of their natural reason.

There is no difficulty about principles ; everybody pays lip service to them. The difficulty is that very few act on them. Among the very few, Christians have been outstanding. Following the few who are Christian at first hand come those who are Christian at second, third and fourth hand, and finally those who imitate Christian practice without knowing where their practice comes from. In the parable, as it is recorded, we are told only of two sons ; the one who said, " I go," and went not, the other who said, " I go not " and nevertheless went. We have to add the third son who both said, " I go " and went, from whom the others took their cue for right speech or action.

The majority of medical men are probably to be reckoned as unbelievers (there are no statistics on the subject) and one might have thought that good intelligence and technical competence were enough to make a man a pioneer in the improvement of medical theory and practice. Is it an accident that there is no agnostic or atheist who has done pioneer work to compare with that of Pasteur and Lister, who were both in their different ways devout Christians ? Those who say it is an accident cannot be refuted. You can never prove that anything is not an accident. But their opinion is unsupported by any evidence.

We have within the scientific community of Western Europe a small scale and partial model of a free society. I claim that it is the consequence of the application of Christian teaching. Certain men of science may be very unwilling to acknowledge their debt. Pseudo-Christians may have done their worst to tarnish the Christian reputation. In spite of that the claim can be justified.

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